



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 4, 2013

Ms. Jena R. Abel
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2013-01968

Dear Ms. Abel:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 478134.

The Texas Board of Nursing (the "board") received a request for four categories of information regarding a named nurse, including any notification letters the board sent to federal and state databases or agencies which may result in the nurse being placed on a Medicare/Medicaid exclusion list.¹ You state the board has released most of the responsive documents. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information other statutes make confidential, such as section 301.466 of the Occupations Code, which provides:

¹You state the board sought and received clarification of a portion of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing that if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or over-broad request for public information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

(a) A complaint and investigation concerning a nurse under this subchapter and all information and material compiled by the board in connection with the complaint and investigation are:

- (1) confidential and not subject to disclosure under [the Act]; and**
- (2) not subject to disclosure, discovery, subpoena, or other means of legal compulsion for release to anyone other than the board or board employee or agent involved in license holder discipline.**

(b) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), information regarding a complaint and an investigation may be disclosed to:

- (1) a person involved with the board in a disciplinary action against the nurse;**
- (2) a nursing licensing or disciplinary board in another jurisdiction;**
- (3) a peer assistance program approved by the board under Chapter 467, Health and Safety Code;**
- (4) a law enforcement agency; or**
- (5) a person engaged in bona fide research, if all information identifying a specific individual has been deleted.**

(c) The filing of formal charges against a nurse by the board, the nature of those charges, disciplinary proceedings of the board, and final disciplinary actions, including warnings and reprimands, by the board are not confidential and are subject to disclosure in accordance with [the Act].

Occ. Code § 301.466. You inform us that the submitted information consists of documents that were created by the board in connection with a board investigation. You state the submitted documents do not fall into any of the categories of information that are subject to disclosure under section 301.466(c). Based on your representations and our review, we agree the submitted information is confidential under section 301.466(a). We find the requestor is not entitled to receive this information under section 301.466(b) and that the information at issue does not fall under section 301.466(c). Accordingly, we conclude the board must withhold Exhibit B under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 301.466(a)(1) of the Occupations Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Kristi L. Wilkins
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLW/ag

Ref: ID# 478134

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)